

AN OUTLINE OF LATIN GRAMMAR

by David G. Jensen

GRAMMAR describes the relations between words. Generally, grammar uses two methods:

ANALYSIS grammatical functions shown mainly by changes in word order (SYNTAX)
INFLECTION changes the forms of the words themselves, usually by adding SUFFIXES.
ENGLISH grammar is primarily analytical, although it retains some inflections;
LATIN grammar is primarily inflected, although it has syntactic conventions as well.
The PARADIGMS (pron *pair-a-dimes*) are the reference tables of inflections (declensions, conjugations *etc*) appended to most Latin Grammars.
MEMORIZE the paradigms, with the sample word provided, and not only their suffixes. This is the only expedient way to learn Latin grammar.

WORDS represent objects, actions, characteristics, concepts *etc*

It is mistaken to regard words merely as symbols. The wealth of associations a word acquires through repeated usage far exceeds its immediate REFERENT.

PARTS OF SPEECH

A PART OF SPEECH is: the particular set of grammatical functions which a given word can perform. Latin and English have the same EIGHT parts of speech.

NOUN (*aka* SUBSTANTIVE) person, place, thing or idea

MEMORIZE: NOMINATIVE SINGULAR, GENITIVE SINGULAR, and GENDER.

These provide sufficient data to employ the noun further,
which cannot be determined with certainty otherwise.

VARIABLES

CASE shows the grammatical function of a noun in a CLAUSE or PHRASE (see SYNTAX, below). Cases other than the nominative are called OBLIQUE. The oblique cases are built on the STEM of the noun, which is obtained by dropping the GENITIVE SINGULAR ending. The stem may not be apparent in the nominative singular, as, for example, in *tempus*, *temporis* (stem = *tempor--*)

Latin *s* changes to *r* between vowels, a phonetic process [Lat $s \rightarrow r / \text{V_V}$] called ROTACISM.

NOMINATIVE shows a SUBJECT OF A CLAUSE;

GENITIVE generally shows possession; it can be called the “adjective” case, because it causes a noun to modify another noun

DATIVE generally shows an INDIRECT OBJECT, expressed in English by the prepositions *to* or *for*.

ACCUSATIVE shows a DIRECT OBJECT; it also shows the object of certain prepositions.

ABLATIVE is the most complex case. As Latin evolved from its ancestral forms, certain case functions COALESCED and the original case forms merged. Thus the ablative unites three originally distinct cases: the true ABLATIVE (from), the INSTRUMENTAL (by or with) and the LOCATIVE (where or when). Various uses of the ablative are characterized by particular names, *e g* Ablatives of SEPARATION, of INSTRUMENT *etc*, often with a preposition. The majority of prepositions require an ablative object. The ablative without a preposition can generally be translated by an English preposition such as *from*, *by*, *with*, *in* or *at*.

Two archaic cases, the second largely SUBSUMED in the ablative (above), retain only vestigial forms:

VOCATIVE used for direct address; its forms are identical with the nominative, except the 2nd declension *m sg* –*e*.

Et tu, Brute? Shakespeare: *Julius Caesar* (III.1.77)

LOCATIVE shows place where; it occurs only in some singular place names of the 1st and 2nd declensions, and with a small group of other nouns indicating time, place or circumstance. For the most part, its function has been ASSUMED by the ablative.

VERSION 1.0 OF THIS DOCUMENT



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A Latin noun has DECLENSION, or set of case endings. Latin has five regular declensions. These declensions are numbered consecutively by number of members. The NOMINATIVE SINGULAR, GENITIVE SINGULAR and GENDER are listed for each noun in the dictionary. The genitive singular minus its case ending provides the STEM of the noun, to which the remaining case endings are affixed. It also differs in each declension, and so identifies which set of endings a noun employs. Neither stem nor declension is always apparent in the nominative singular. Following are the genitive singular endings, in order by declension:

1. -ae
2. -ī
3. -is
4. -ūs
5. -ēī

NUMBER is SINGULAR (one) or PLURAL (more than one).

GENDER is MASCULINE, FEMININE or NEUTER does not correlate with animate vs inanimate entities; Latin gender is usually arbitrary, and so must be memorized for each noun.

NEUTER LAW The nominative and accusative endings are identical, *sg* or *pl* respectively.

The nominative/accusative plural ending is always -a.

Most 1st declension nouns are feminine; a few are masculine (*nom sg* always -a)

The majority of 2nd declension nouns are masculine (*nom sg* -us, -er), and a few feminine (*nom sg* -us)

A significant number are neuter (*nom sg* -um)

Most nouns of the 3rd declension are masculine or feminine, and a significant number are neuter (incl *nom sg* -us, *gen sg* -oris; e.g. *tempus*, -oris *n*)

O tempora! O mores! Cicero: *In L. S. Catilinam* I (I)

PRONOUN represents a noun or nouns

TYPE each type has its own declension

- PERSONAL (he/she/it/they)
- REFLEXIVE (himself/herself/itself/themselves)
- INTENSIVE (himself/herself/itself/themselves)
- INTERROGATIVE (who? what? which?)

With a stated REFERENT, these can also serve as INTERROGATIVE ADJECTIVES.

Quis hic locus, quae regiō, quae mundi plaga? Seneca: *Hercules Furens* (V.1138)

- RELATIVE (who, which, that)
- INDEFINITE (someone/something, anybody, anyone/anything) *etc*
- NEGATIVE (nobody, no one/nothing) *etc*

VARIABLES

- CASE same as NOUN
- NUMBER same as NOUN
- GENDER same as NOUN

ADJECTIVE modifies a noun or pronoun

Latin adjectives belong either to the FIRST (feminine) and SECOND (masculine or neuter) Declensions (*nom sg m* -us, *f* -a, *n* -um), or to the THIRD Declension. Third declension adjectives are further distinguished as having one (*mfn*: ending varies), two (*mf* -is, *n* -e) or three (*m* most often -er, *f* -is, *n* -e) different *nom sg* endings to identify gender.

VARIABLES

- CASE same as NOUN
- NUMBER same as NOUN
- GENDER same as NOUN
- DEGREE indicates relative level or intensity in relation to another word or words
 - POSITIVE simply posits the meaning of the adjective or adverb to its SUBJECT
i e is the meaning of the word itself, without external reference
 - COMPARATIVE more or less than the OBJECT OF COMPARISON
 - SUPERLATIVE most or least in degree of the entire set of objects cited

NOTES _____

VERB expresses action or state of being

MEMORIZE: the FOUR PRINCIPLE PARTS for each verb in vocabulary:

FIRST 1st person singular, present, active indicative.

Helps to identify a verb as REGULAR or IRREGULAR (not always apparent otherwise)

SECOND present, active infinitive. Identifies Conjugation of the verb;
provides the PRESENT STEM (minus -re)

THIRD 1st person, singular, perfect, active indicative. Provides the PERFECT STEM (minus -ī)

FOURTH perfect, passive participle. Provides the SUPINE STEM (minus participial case ending)

All perfect, passive participles are DECLINED (inflected) as 1st/2nd Declension adjectives.

The PERFECT, PASSIVE tense system consists of PERFECT, PASSIVE participles with the AUXILIARY sum, esse.

The participles are inflected to AGREE (same case, number and gender) with the subject of the verb.

Latin verb forms are

FINITE (able to be used as the main verb in an INDEPENDENT clause – *rf* SYNTAX, below)

INFINITE (including verbal nouns and adjectives).

All forms of a Latin verb are built on one of the three STEMS:

PRESENT STEM present, imperfect and future (the IMPERFECT) tenses; present infinitive; gerund;
present active and future passive (also called GERUNDIVE) participles

PERFECT STEM perfect, pluperfect and future perfect active tenses; perfect active infinitive

SUPINE STEM supine; perfect passive and future active participles

A Latin verb has CONJUGATION (verb CONJUGATE), or a particular set of endings.

Latin has four CONJUGATIONS (large sets of verbs (called REGULAR) which share a particular set of endings), and which are distinguished by the STEM VOWEL at the end of the present stem (*rf* above). The ROOT consists of the present stem minus the stem vowel.

The stem vowels which distinguish each regular conjugation are these:

1. -ā (clam-ō, clam-ā-re) 2. -ē (man-e-ō, man-ē-re) 3. -e (dic-ō, dic-e-re) 4. -ī (ven-i-ō, ven-ī-re)

The stem vowel is retained in the first person singular of each Conjugation except the Third, in which the short -e- is easily ELIDED (as it is elsewhere). A subset, however, of the Third Conjugation has -iō in the first person singular (fac-iō, -ere). As in the Fourth Conjugation, this -i- is retained in its other inflections.

Most regular verbs of the 1st and 4th Conjugations form the perfect stem by adding -v- to the present stem:

1. clam-ō, clamā-re, clamā-v-ī 4. audi-ō, audī-re, audī-v-ī

Some verbs of the 2nd Conjugation form the perfect stem by adding -u- (the VOCALIC form of v) to the ROOT

2. mon-e-ō, mon-ē-re, mon-u-ī

As in the English past tense, certain perfect stems (mostly 3rd Conjugation) use a type of inflection called ABLAUT, or change of internal vowel in the ROOT form of the verb,

e g Latin ROOT fac- → PERFECT STEM fēc-

REDUPLICATION of the initial syllable in third principle part of certain verbs is another distinctive method of forming the perfect stem, *e g*

(1) dō, dare dedī, datus

Imperium sine fine dedī. Vergil: *Aeneis* (I.272)

(3) canō, canere, cecinī, cantus

Cecinī pascua, rūra, ducēs. Vergil: tombstone

FINITE FORMS

VARIABLES

PERSON relation of verb to the noun(s) in a sentence.

FIRST PERSON speaker (I write/walk)

SECOND PERSON spoken to (you write/walk)

THIRD PERSON spoken of or about (he/she/it, they *etc*)

NUMBER same as NOUN

NOTES _____

TENSE when an event occurs, relative to a temporal point of reference

IMPERFECT SYSTEM denotes INCOMPLETE action

PRESENT (he/she/it does)

IMPERFECT (he/she/it was doing, used to do)

FUTURE (he/she/it will do)

PERFECT SYSTEM denotes COMPLETED action

PERFECT (he/she/it did, has done)

PLUPERFECT *aka* PAST PERFECT (he/she/it had done)

FUTURE PERFECT (he/she/it will have done)

VOICE quality of the verb, *i e* relation to its subject

ACTIVE (+ reflexive subset) the subject ACTS

REFLEXIVE subject acts on itself (*i e* IO and/or DO are same
as the subject, represented by reflexive pronoun)

PASSIVE (+ deponent subset) the subject is ACTED UPON

DEPONENT verb is passive in form, but active in meaning (intransitive)

SEMI-DEPONENT active forms in the present tenses, and passive in the perfect.

MOOD MANNER of a verb, *i e* the sense in which it is intended

INDICATIVE statement of fact

IMPERATIVE direct command

SUBJUNCTIVE contrary to fact (*i e* not statement of fact, whether positive
or negative); most often found in dependent clauses

The PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE changes the stem vowel from -ā- to -ē- in the First Conjugation,
and adds -ā- to the present stem in the remaining three conjugations

1. -ā- → -ē- (clam-a-t, *cf* clam-e-t) 2. -ē- → -eā- (man-e-nt, *cf* man-ea-nt)

3. -e- → -ā- (dicitis, *cf* dic-ā-tis) 4. -ī- → -iā- (ven-ī-mus, *cf* ven-i-ā-mus)

note that weak short -e- here becomes short -i-.

English verbs also have ASPECT.

Latin verbs may be translated with any of these three aspects, as appropriate.

POSITIVE (I say)

PROGRESSIVE (I am saying)

EMPHATIC (I do say)

INFINITE FORMS

VERBAL NOUNS

INFINITIVE

VARIABLES

TENSE present, perfect or future

VOICE active or passive

GERUND (2nd Declension)

VARIABLES

CASE genitive, dative, accusative or ablative

NUMBER singular

GENDER neuter

NOTES _____

SUPINE (4th Declension)

VARIABLES

CASE accusative or ablative

NUMBER singular

GENDER masculine

PARTICIPLE (VERBAL ADJECTIVE)

VARIABLES

TENSE/VOICE The inflections are more complex than in English.

PRESENT ACTIVE (3rd Declension: saying, doing)

PERFECT PASSIVE (1st/2nd Declension: said, did)

FUTURE ACTIVE (1st/2nd Declension: going to say/do, about to say/do)

FUTURE PASSIVE *aka* GERUNDIVE)

(1st/2nd Declension: going to be said/done, about to be said/done, must be said/done)

CASE same as NOUN

NUMBER same as NOUN

GENDER same as NOUN

ADVERB modifies a verb, adjective or another adverb

DEGREE same as ADJECTIVE

PREPOSITION expresses relative position or direction *etc*

MEMORIZE: CASE REQUIRED ablative or accusative

Most prepositions take the ABLATIVE case; the most common of these form a rhyme:

ā, ab, dē; cum, ex, ē; prō, prae, sine

Certain prepositions, some implying motion, take the ACCUSATIVE case.

Several can take either case, for example:

Lat. 'in' + ablative = Eng *in* or *on*; Latin 'in' + accusative = Eng *into*

CONJUNCTION connects words or groups of words [not inflected]

ENCLITIC *–que* (“and”) is APPENDED to one word in the series

Arma virumque canō, Vergil: *Aeneis* (I.1)

–que...–que = “both...and”

INTERJECTION expresses surprise or emotion [not inflected]

SYNTAX

Latin clauses, both independent and dependent, tend, but are not required, to follow this sequence:

SUBJECT (Modifier) + INDIRECT OBJECT (Modifier) + DIRECT OBJECT (Modifier) + (Modifier) VERB

cf preferred order in Latin S IO DO V vs English S V IO DO (or *to* IO)

CLAUSE contains both a subject and verb

INDEPENDENT can stand alone (a SENTENCE contains at least one independent clause)

DEPENDENT cannot stand alone (*e g* a RELATIVE clause, INTRODUCED by subject :who/which/that)

A MODIFIER specifies or otherwise limits the definition of its OBJECT (the word or words it modifies)

A modifier can be a single word adjective, APPOSITE NOUN or adverb)

or group of words (PHRASE or RELATIVE CLAUSE):

PHRASE lacks a subject and verb, *e g* a PREPOSITIONAL phrase (*e g* *ad finem* = *until the end*)

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